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REMARKS

SEP 11 2006

The present amendment is submitted in response to the Office Action dated June 9, 2006, which set a three-month period for response, making this amendment due by September 9, 2006, a Saturday, or by Monday, September 11, 2006.

Claims 1-18 are pending in this application.

In the Office Action, claims 1-18 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 7,011,266 to Hashimoto et al.

The Applicants respectfully submit that the Hashimoto reference is not a valid reference to support the rejection under 35 U.S.C. 102(b). Section 102(b) requires that the Hashimoto invention was described in a printed publication *more than one year prior* to the date of the application for patent in the U.S. of the present application.

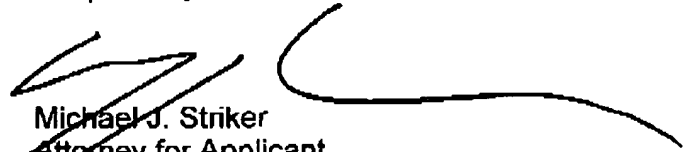
The relevant date of the Hashimoto patent, therefore, is February 19, 2004, the PCT publication date, which is NOT more than 1 year prior to the U.S. application date of the present application, which is December 13, 2004. In addition, the claimed priority date of the present application is October 4, 2003.

Therefore, the rejection of claims 1-18 under Section 102(b) over the Hashimoto reference is improper. The Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of this rejection.

In this amendment, the specification was amended to add standard headings and to delete reference to the claims.

The application in its amended state is believed to be in condition for allowance. Action to this end is courteously solicited. If any issues remain to be resolved before an allowance of this case, the undersigned attorney for the Applicants would very much welcome a telephone call to discuss these matters.

Respectfully submitted,



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